Adrienne Asch
1946–2013

Adrienne Asch, who died on Nov. 19, 2013, taught at Wellesley for just a little more than a decade, from 1994 to 2005, but in that time, she made a profound impression on the students and faculty members who came to know her. Adrienne was an influential voice for people with disabilities in debates over matters such as end-of-life care, genetic counseling, and abortion—debates in which their perspectives and experiences had been discounted. Through her books, articles, and many public appearances in the US and around the world, as well as her participation on a multitude of commissions, task forces, and advisory committees, Adrienne helped to transform scholarly debates on those topics and inspire changes in professional practices and legislation. Adrienne’s work was charged by her passion for social justice and a vision of a world fairer to all people, including those with disabilities. At Wellesley, she brought that same passion to her teaching, and so became a powerful figure in the lives of her students.

Before her career as a scholar, Adrienne had been a psychotherapist, a political activist, and an investigator for an antidiscrimination agency. Her turn to academia began in the early 1980s when the “Baby Doe” cases came to national attention. The Baby Does were disabled newborns whose parents had withheld relatively simple life-saving treatments. Attending a forum on the controversy, Adrienne pointed out that the debate pivoted on assertions about the lives of people with disabilities, but that the group who knew the most about this, disabled people themselves, seemed to be excluded from the discussion. That was a pattern she found throughout bioethics: Arguments over whether it was ethical to abort fetuses with genetic defects, she discovered, were dominated by tragic myths about the lives of people with disabilities, rather than actual lived experience. She urged reforms in genetic counseling that would replace such assumptions with real-world information.

Adrienne’s writings combined insights from feminist theory, philosophy, psychology, and the new field of disability studies, in which she was pioneer. Perhaps understandably, the College didn’t seem to know what to make of her. Instead of being placed in a department, Adrienne was given her own program: She was the only faculty member in “Biology, Ethics, and the Politics of Human Reproduction.” Adrienne bragged that she had both the longest title and the shortest department meetings of anyone at the College. (Eventually, the College asked her to join the Women’s and Gender Studies Department, where she taught for two years.)

Students flocked to her courses: Ethical and Policy Issues in Reproduction; Women and Motherhood; Multidisciplinary Approaches to Abortion; Literature and Medicine; Disability and Society. They

Molly Sanderson Campbell ’60
1939–2014

Molly Campbell, Wellesley’s legendary dean of students from 1984 to 1998, died on Jan. 28, her 75th birthday.

Molly first came to Wellesley as a student. A member of the class of 1960, she was a gifted math major, president of House Presidents’ Council, Durant scholar, and member of Phi Beta Kappa. She was already a force, with the intelligence and esprit, organizational flair and wry wit that she would later bring to her exemplary campus leadership. Lecturer in mathematics, dean of the classes of 1980 and 1984, assistant to the president, and affirmative-action officer, she was appointed dean of students in 1984, a post she held—and fundamentally redefined—for 14 years.

Molly was an indomitable, indefatigable presence on campus. She cared deeply about helping students to get a meaningful education and also, as she would say, “to have a life” in Wellesley’s intense residential learning environment. It mattered to her to be in residence herself. For her entire tenure as dean, she and her family lived at Oakwoods, where she regularly gathered colleagues and students for meetings, celebrations, retreats, and occasional high jinks.

From the hub that was her office in Green Hall, Molly managed a complex administrative domain of 12 departments, each with distinct agendas and urgencies. Forging links among her staff, building bridges to the faculty, she connected us. An activist administrator, innovative program developer, and fearless problem-solver, Molly was a realist with high ideals. She was there to be of use, to get the job done. The job, in her view, was “to be sure that student concerns were heard in the rest of the College,” to create a community of caring adults “engaged in one conversation” about student life.

These were years of sea change in Wellesley’s student body, and Molly’s vision of what student life at Wellesley could and should be was wide and deep. A staunch champion of diversity, she famously said, “There should be no Wendy Wellesley. We are all Wellesley women, and the variety of Wellesley women is infinite. We want to be aware and supportive of everyone in the community.” And so she was.

She was there for first-year students who had traveled many miles or great cultural distances to be here. She believed Wellesley owed every incoming student an equal chance to realize her potential, and she launched many multicultural initiatives to do just that. She was there as an ally, resource, and advocate for Wellesley’s most vulnerable students. She chaired the Academic Review Board with authority and empathy and was a clear, firm, and compassionate presence in General Judiciary hearings.

She was there as a mentor and role model for student leaders. Not “Dean Campbell,” always “Molly,” she regularly attended Cabinet and Senate meetings. “She was so uncondescending and real,” one College

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found a scholar with, as an article about her in the journal Nature put it, the “endearing ability to be at once gracious and confrontational, passionate and prickly.” The intensity that marked Adrienne’s life as a public intellectual made her a fascinating teacher and a loyal ally to students. One of her Wellesley students, Bergen Nelson ’98, now a doctor, writes that Adrienne was not simply an “amazing teacher and mentor,” but also a “dear friend” who continued to guide her personally and professionally for many years after Wellesley. Adrienne inspired some students to pursue careers in bioethics, but perhaps even more importantly, influenced many more students who graduated into health-care work to keep in mind the ethical issues and perspectives they learned from her.

Bostonians are weary familiar with Red Sox stars who leave town to play for the Yankees. Like those baseball phenoms, when Adrienne got a better offer, she too left Boston for New York. She moved to Yeshiva University to become the first director of its Center for Ethics. Befitting her multidisciplinary background, at Yeshiva she was a professor of bioethics who held a joint appointment in Yeshiva’s medical school, but also taught in its law and social-work schools.

I’ve left the aspect of Adrienne that many people noticed first, her blindness, for last. Adrienne was a proud member of the National Federation of the Blind, and she was happy to serve as a mentor to other blind people, especially young blind academics. But her goal, both as a citizen and scholar, was always to make blindness, and disability more generally, an unremarkable attribute, a variation that might be considered no more significant than body build or hair color. The day when that happens seems a long way off; undoubtedly to most people, it is an ideal that seems bizarre, or at least utopian. Then again, if Adrienne’s intent was to make blindness one of the less interesting facts about herself, she clearly succeeded.

—Tom Burke, Professor of Political Science

**MOLLY SANDERSON CAMPBELL ’60**

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Government president recalled, “dispensing with drama and clarifying the issues, all with a light touch and such good will and support that we always knew she was for us.”

Students remember her voice, her energy, her walk “at a brisk pace, head forward, like her thinking—almost daring you to keep up with her.” Like all of us in Molly’s orbit, they especially remember her sense of humor—a playful undercurrent of gentle irreverence and irony.

“Take your work seriously,” she seemed to be saying, “but not so much yourselves.”

Our no-nonsense dean was full of fun, and students loved her for it. So much so that in the spring of 1996, Molly’s Pub was launched—a gathering spot where students, faculty, and staff came together to hang out, a home and showcase for Wellesley’s comics and poets and free spirits. “We felt like we were part of a community there,” one student remembers. “We all took a break. I think Molly’s goal was to create a chance and a space for another kind of flourishing, for a healthier balance. She cared about our academic endeavors, and about so much more. She cared about our lives.”

This is Molly’s legacy. Without fanfare or self-promotion, she went about the work of realizing her ideals for student life. Thanks to her commitment and imagination, Wellesley is a more welcoming, generous, and inclusive place.

Molly flourished in retirement. A voracious reader and ardent tennis fan, she had time to indulge those pleasures. She had time for her large extended family and for her many friends. With her daughter, Alison, she tended her beautiful gardens, and she experienced the sheer joy of timeless hours with her adored grandson, Ben. These were years also of adventure and service—far away, in Botswana, Russia, and South Africa, and in Second Mesa, Ariz., where she volunteered for many years in Hopi elementary classrooms. Her life was brimful.

As colleagues and students who were influenced, encouraged, and inspired by her have abundantly affirmed since her death, Molly epitomized Wellesley’s motto Non Ministriari sed Ministrae. She was an extraordinary dean of students. She was an extraordinary colleague and an extraordinary friend. She was an altogether extraordinary woman.

—Pamela Koehler Daniels ’59, Class Dean, 1981–2000

**ANNE DE COURSEY CLAPP**

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the years, my wife, Ming, and I enjoyed Anne’s friendship and her (in her own words) “old-fashioned” wit and wisdom. Her honesty, her humanity and humility, her never-ceasing intellectual curiosity, and her love of Asian art and culture will continue to inspire all those who knew her.

To celebrate Anne’s life as teacher-scholar, I would like to cite a poem written on a commemorative landscape painting in 1064 by the then 90-year-old Chinese scholar-official-poet Zhang Wei, which was lovingly translated by Anne, from her 2012 book:  

_When the midwinter ice first breaks and the Tao River clears, I chant as I wander past misty villages, by distant towns.
On a sandbar the sun sets where wildfowl flock together, From my pillow the west wind sounds like drums and horns.
A lone scull and a winter lantern follow me fishing through the night, I seize the moment of timely rain to plow the spring fields.
Why say wealth is first among the Five Happenances? I have lived more than ninety years in perfect peace._

She was only five years short!

—Heaping Liu, Associate Professor of Art

**GABRIEL H. LOVETT**

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were vital for him and for all of us in Europe and the US. I will quote the last paragraph because it encapsulates his belief in and his commitment to historical truth:

I have never been able to forget our years in Spain and the Spanish Civil War. I am still trying to sort out the problems posed by that conflict. I do still believe, however, that in spite of Soviet involvement in the Spanish conflict, in spite of the fact that so many communists volunteered for service in Spain, and in spite of so many outrageous episodes that took place on the Republican side in the years 1933–1939, the struggle of the Spanish Republic to free itself from the stranglehold of ultra reactionary Spain supported by Fascist states of Germany, Italy, and Portugal while being denied the right to buy weapons from the so-called Western democracies, when all was said and done, was a good fight, I will believe this until the day I die.

Dear Harratto, despite the fear you had of dying, and my folly in having said to you years ago that no matter when you would die, it would not be at a young age, I am very glad that you lived, in the end, a long and full life. Rest in peace.

—Elena Gascón-Vera, Professor of Spanish